



NAVIGATING TURBULENCE: THE CRUCIAL ROLE OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION TRAINING FOR AIRLINE SECURITY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE STAFF

The first case of air rage was reported in 1947 on a flight from Havana to Miami and involved an intoxicated passenger assaulting another passenger. Air rage and unruly passenger behavior reached a record high in 2021 when the FAA received 5,973 reports from airlines, an increase of 492% from 2020. Customer service training, particularly for forward-faced staff such as in-flight, ticket, and gate agents, plays a crucial role in preventing such incidents. Resolving passenger complaints is vital to maintaining customer satisfaction and contributes to the airline's success. When a flight is delayed or canceled, passengers may become frustrated, but the staff's conflict resolution training can de-escalate tensions and provide solutions that can mitigate negative experiences. Staff ability to calmly resolve a conflict prevents the situation

from escalating and ensures the safety and security of other passengers, making them an integral part of the operation.

Conflict resolution skills are essential in the workplace, too, as airline operations require close cooperation among many teams, pilots, cabin crew, ground crew, customer service staff, contractors, and more. Maintaining a professional and harmonious working relationship using conflict resolution skills will ensure a smooth and efficient operation. Conflicts resolved constructively in the work environment help build a positive organizational culture; job satisfaction will be higher while turnover rates are reduced. Effective conflict resolution skills promote teamwork and collaboration and are essential in the aviation industry due to the complex nature of the work.

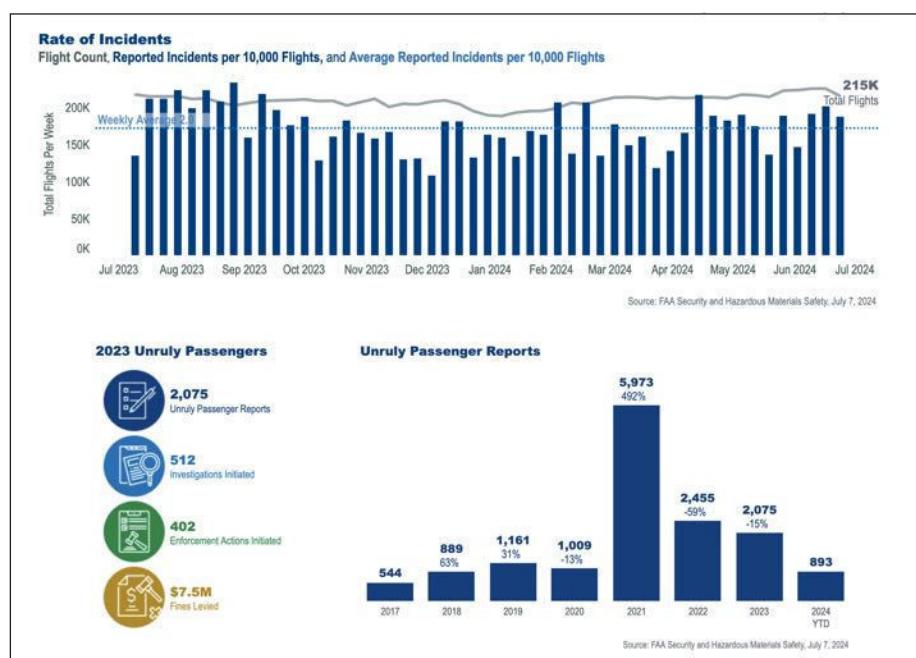
Conflict resolution skills can be shared with staff through training. These skills

include active listening, effectively communicating, showing empathy, being creative and problem-solving, controlling your emotions, remembering to be patient, negotiating, assertiveness when necessary, and always being open to adjusting your approach based on the situation and feedback from others.

Developing and practicing conflict resolution skills will reduce the need for law enforcement involvement at the gate or on the airplane, it will improve relationships with customers and fellow staff, and will help you maintain a more positive, professional work environment. Aviation is a highly stressful career, but the stress does not have to define who you are. By actively engaging in conflict resolution, you, as a staff member, can contribute to a more positive and professional work environment, fostering a sense of motivation and commitment among the staff.

If you want to reduce your stress while ensuring you are operating within the highly regulated aviation field, learn conflict resolution skills and put them to work every day. You can use conflict resolution skills to improve communication between pilots, flight attendants, ground staff, maintenance, and management. Improved communication will reduce misunderstandings while fostering a positive work environment. By mastering conflict resolution, you can take control of your work environment and reduce your stress levels, empowering yourself in your role.

Airlines should develop and implement conflict resolution training programs for staff, focusing on the skills I mentioned above: active listening, empathy, negotiation, and emotional control. This





will prevent an unruly passenger incident from escalating.

As a staff member, if you witness a dispute at the airport, office, or on board a plane, you can play a crucial role as a mediator. By offering to listen and help resolve the conflict quickly and fairly, you can contribute to a more harmonious and professional work environment.

Your skills in identifying, managing, and resolving an unruly passenger incident will lead to a better passenger experience for everyone, including the unruly person. Your dedication to ensuring that respect is shown to the passenger while communicating clearly and openly will let others see you as a leader, and they will know you are in charge. Your positive, professional, yet assertive behavior will reduce the likelihood that the unruly passenger situation will escalate. You will

feel better at the end of the day knowing that your actions made a difference in the lives of many.

In the office, address conflicts promptly and implement clear policies and procedures that show fairness and a sense of security. By actively promoting diversity and inclusion through conflict resolution, you can make a significant contribution to creating a more harmonious and productive workplace, making you feel valued and respected.

Conflict resolution skills are vital to maintaining an efficient, on-time airline. A positive organizational culture that fosters safety, customer satisfaction, and employee relations will ensure a safe airline. Conflict resolution training and strategies will create a pleasant environment for employees and customers. 

About the Author

Frederick Reitz is an aviation security specialist, private pilot, licensed Florida mediator, and co-founder and managing director of SAFEsky, a leading aviation security company. His career spans 20 years in aviation security and 15 years in law enforcement. His achievements include creating the security programs for two start-up airlines and is dedicated to this crucial aspect of the industry. Frederick's expertise in risk and threat analysis, emergency response planning, fingerprint technology integration and security protocol implementation has positioned him as a leading authority with extensive experience in regional and international airlines. He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in aviation management and a master's in aeronautical science. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in conflict analysis and resolution. As a thought leader, he passionately shares his knowledge and insights as a speaker on aviation security at national and international forums. His presentations, whether addressing flight attendants, ground security coordinators, pilots or police officers, reflect his profound understanding of aviation safety and the challenges diverse industry professionals face. He can be reached at rick@safesky.us.

